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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/23/2011
TAGS: IZ KDEM PGOV PREL
SUBJECT: DIYALA GOVERNOR TO ISF: STOP ELECTION-SHAPING
ARRESTS

REF: 10BAGHDAD45 09BAGHDAD2937 09BAGHDAD3065

Classified By: CHIEF OF PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT JOHN UNDERRINGER FOR REASONS 1.4(b) AND (d)

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Diyala message.

¶2. (C) Summary: Diyala,s Governor, Abd al Nasr Al Mahdawi, used Diyala,s February 21st election security rehearsal to warn senior Iraqi Security Force officials from across the province against executing additional politically-motivated arrest warrants prior to the elections. As previously reported (reftels), a stream of arrests targeting Sunni political and government officials over the past year has created the perception among the Sunni community in Diyala that the central government and sectarian-biased security forces are trying to shape the elections process and intimidate the Sunni dominated Provincial Government. The Governor,s speech appeared to be an effort to warn security forces that there would be fall-out if additional candidates are arrested in the next two weeks and implied he has the Prime Minister's support on this issue. End Summary.

¶3. (C) During a province-wide elections security rehearsal on February 21st in Baqubah, Diyala,s Governor, Dr. Abd al Nasr Al Mahdawi (Iraqi Islamic Party), warned provincial security officials that he would not tolerate additional politically-motivated arrests. The elections rehearsal was hosted by the Diyala Provincial Director of Police (PDOP), Abdul Hussein Ali Damook, and Diyala Operations Commander, Tariq Abd Al Wahab Jasim Mahdi Al-Azzawi, and attended by senior security officials from across the province, as well as the Provincial Council Chairman, Abd-al-Talib Muhammad Hasan, the Governorate Elections Officer (GEO), Amer Mujiid, and other government officials.

¶4. (C) During closing remarks at the rehearsal, the Governor gave a short speech on the importance of the upcoming elections and raised the issue of politically motivated arrests. Looking directly at the PDOP, the Governor told the room that security officials had better not continue &playing the game8 of affecting the elections process by targeting political parties and community leaders for arrest. He noted that there are some 3000 outstanding arrest warrants in the province, and warned security officials against executing these warrants in the two weeks prior to the elections. The Governor also cautioned that he considers it a crime to arrest people for political reasons, and an even bigger crime not to arrest real terrorists (Comment: Inferred from his comments is a caution to the security officials to stop protecting Shi,a insurgent groups) nearly 90 percent of prisoners in Diyala are Sunni, despite the fact that Diyala has sizeable Shi,a insurgent elements).

¶5. (S/NF) The Governor closed his comments by claiming he could get a letter from the Prime Minister blocking what he views as politically motivated arrests if they did continue. (Comment: We interpret this as indicating he already had some understanding with the Prime Minister in this regards,

although it is possible he is bluffing). There was no official response in the room to the Governor's comments; however, the head of the Diyala Major Crimes Unit and the PDOP's right-hand man⁸, Major Hisham Kalifah Khadim al-Tammimi (Shi'a), was overheard by U.S. personnel making a number of derogatory and pernicious comments about how he was &ready to arrest anyone,⁸ suggesting he did not care if arrests were politically motivated. (Note: reporting in other channels implicates Hisham in many unlawful and sectarian-biased arrests, torture, murder and bribery.) Diyala's Chief Judge Fa'iqa (also Shi'a) has also told PRToffs that Hisham represents Shi'a interests, has no qualms about bringing in innocent people under Article 4 terrorism charges, and is &dangerous.⁸

¶6. (C) As previously reported in reftels, the arrests, including the most recent arrest of Provincial Council member Najim Harbie, created concern among Provincial Council members and other Sunni officials that they may be next to be targeted. Nevertheless, Sunni parties in Diyala appear to be continuing their election campaign efforts in force. There are visible campaign posters for Najim and many other Sunni candidates around the province. Bassim Mohammed Ali Samarrai, party leader for the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue (IFND) al Mutluq, as well as Provincial Council member Ayed Ali Ahmed (IFND) told PRToff on February 22nd that they were continuing their campaign in Diyala despite both the candidate ban and what they see as sectarian-biased arrests.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: The statement by the Governor was a challenge to more than 100 senior security officials from across the province on the issue of sectarian and politically

motivated arrests.. This is the first instance we know of in which he has spoken publicly on the issue, and it is notable that he relies on these same security forces (predominantly Shi'a) for his own protection. By doing so, the Governor has now put himself directly in the path of those who seek to use politically motivated arrests or other nefarious means to better their odds in the political power struggle.

End Comment.

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